

Event Planning

When planning an event, it can often be a stressful time. During this process it is best to make a checklist and go step by step in the planning process. It is important to write the checklist down, set due dates, and designate a person to be responsible. For each category set a date of completion on each task and designate one of the committee members to be the person responsible for making proper contacts. Follow the steps below to have a successful and effective event. Good luck.

Steps to Planning and Event:

- ✓ **Set up a committee to plan the event:** Be organized, keep minutes of meetings and delegate responsibilities to all members of the committee. Communication is crucial to keep everyone up-to-date about progress the committee makes. This includes designating a chairperson to head up the committee members.
- ✓ **Set Goals:** Developing goals can help to keep everyone on the same page when planning any event. The committee should ask these questions before planning. What do we hope to achieve with this event? What should the participations come away with after attending this event?
- ✓ **Determine your target audience:** The event will only be successful if the right people know about it and the publicity activities appeal to their interests. The following questions may help describe the target audience. Who do we want to reach with this message? What are their common characteristics (occupation, demographics, and interests)? What issues are of interest to them?
- ✓ **Determine the program agenda!**
 - Make an outline of key program areas and topics to cover.
 - Choose key topics that can be presented in the amount of time available during the event.
 - Keep your target audience in mind. Is this the information they want or need?
 - Select presenters for all topics to be covered.
- ✓ **Contact Prospective speakers.**
 - Discuss subject matter of their presentation.
 - Find out what audiovisual equipment is needed.
 - Get speakers' biographies for introductions.
 - Provide any needed background material to speakers.
- ✓ **Arrange for needed equipment.** When setting up the equipment, make sure it all works properly and that everyone in the audience can see or hear the information. A backup plan should also be available. For example, have transparencies of a PowerPoint presentation so that an overhead projector can be used if needed. The following is a list of equipment that may be needed:
 - Overhead projectors, projector screens
 - Computer presentation hardware
 - Easels and flip charts
 - Dry erase boards, chalkboards
 - TV/VCR
 - Microphone, speaker/sound system, amplifier, lighting
 - Electrical cord, plug adapter, outlets, internet connections
 - Pagers, walkie-talkies, cell phones, headphones,
 - Photocopiers, fax machines, and other office equipment
 - Tables and chairs
 - Staging, platforms, a podium
- ✓ **Select the Event Date.** Consider the time of year and the time of day that would best suit both your audience and your organization.
 - Is there a slower time of the year when your audience may have more time to attend an event or conference away from the office or home?
 - Transportation may be a factor if certain times of the year are prone to inclement weather.
 - Meeting facilities may be difficult to reserve at certain times of the year.
 - Setting an event date at the peak time of the year within your organization can make planning difficult, as staff may not have time for the added work.
 - Is there a certain time of day that the target audience is more available?
- ✓ **Select an event facility.**

- ✓ **Make arrangements for refreshments.** Is a meal necessary or will a snack be enough? Will the meal be catered or will participants make their own plans? How much food do you need? A basic rule of thumb is to plan for enough food to feed 1.5 times the number of attendees you estimate. The following are a few more things to plan for.
 - Arrange for payment
 - Seating arrangements, tables placed for easy flow of traffic
 - Utensils, plates, napkins, cups, and table clothes
 - Condiments for both food and drinks
 - Drinks
 - Trash Receptacles
- ✓ **Plan and Implement the marketing campaign.** There are many ways to promote your event to your target audience. Choosing a combination of marketing methods may be the most effective and efficient way to reach them. Consider the following when planning your marketing campaign:
 - Print ads in newspapers, magazines, etc.
 - Direct mail (flyers, brochures, invitations, registration materials) to prospective participants.
 - Articles or ads in your organization's newsletter or those of related organizations.
 - Press Releases
 - Signage (billboards, posters)
 - Websites
 - Word of mouth
 - Radio and TV public service announcements
- ✓ **Prepare handouts**
 - Prepare the agenda/program
 - A central theme may be used for the event. If so, tie presentation titles in with the theme.
 - Plan for set-up/tear down time to set up tables and chairs or to switch equipment between speakers.
 - Presentations should be in blocks of no more than 2 hours, with periodic breaks for "stretching" and/or refreshments.
 - Prepare fact sheets.
 - Prepare brochures.
 - Collect other already printed materials needed.
 - Put materials together as an information packet, hand them out during presentations, or arrange them on a table for participants to pick up.
- ✓ **Set up a registration area.** This area may be used for several things including:
 - Writing and distributing name tags
 - Handing out event or information packets
 - Answering participants' questions or giving directions
- ✓ **Finalize and confirm all arrangements with:**
 - Event facility, Caterer, and Presenters
- ✓ **Take pictures**

Special Considerations for an outdoor event:

- ✓ **Post signs showing directions to event locations, if needed.**
- ✓ **Seating arrangements for audience**
- ✓ **Parking and Restroom facilities**
- ✓ **Transportation to/from location**
- ✓ **Tables for showing displays, laying out brochures, registering participants, or eating and serving refreshments.**
- ✓ **Trash receptacles**

After the event:

- ✓ **Survey Participants.** You may want to include a short survey in the information packet that participants can fill out and hand in before leaving the event. Survey questions should concentrate on the effectiveness of the event and suggestions for improvement.
- ✓ **Thank you notes**